

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
HABITAT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE  
HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL**

Game Branch / HPC Project Number: 14-230

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

**Project Title:** Black Mtns Unit 15D to Kanab Creek Unit 12A/B/13A Bighorn Sheep Translocation and Monitoring

**Region and Game Management Unit:** Region 2, Unit 12A/B/13A

**Local Habitat Partnership Committee (LHPC):**

- Arizona Strip Habitat Work Group

**Was the project presented to the LHPC?**

YES ☐ NO ☒ –

**Has this project been submitted in previous years?** YES ☐ NO ☒

**If Yes, was it funded?** YES ☐ NO ☐ → **Funded HPC Project #(s):**

**Project Type:** Bighorn Sheep Translocation and Monitoring

**Brief Project Summary:** If the population in Unit 15D can sustain removal of sheep in 2015; 30-40 sheep will be capture and translocated to Unit 12A/B/**13A**. Release sites have been previously identified based on statewide objectives and include: Kanab Creek Units 12A/B/**13A**, or other approved release locations.

**Big Game Wildlife Species to Benefit:** Desert Bighorn Sheep

**Implementation Schedule** (Month/Day/Year):

Project Start Date:

September 1, 2015

Project End Date:

June 30, 2020

**Environmental Compliance:**

NEPA Completed: Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A ☐

State Historic Preservation Office - Archaeological Clearance:

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Projected Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Arizona Game and Fish Department EA Checklist: **Completed**

N/A ☐

Projected Completion Date: Capture: M12-0514075015- June 2012  
Release: M11-07134822- Nov 2011

**PROJECT FUNDING**

**Special Big Game License Tag Funds Requested:**

\$ 35,000.00

**Cost Share or Matching Funds:**

\$ 54,000.00

**Total Project Costs:**

**\$ 89,000.00**

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

**Applicant** (please print):

Todd Buck

**Address:**

3500 S. Lake Mary Road

Flagstaff, AZ 86001

**E-mail:**

[tbuck@azgfd.gov](mailto:tbuck@azgfd.gov)

**Telephone:** 928-856-0724

**Date:** August 29, 2014

**AGFD Contact and Phone No.** (If applicant is not AGFD personnel):

**Project has been coordinated with:**

Game Program, BLM Arizona Strip Manager, BLM Kingman Office, USFS North Kaibab Ranger District

**NEED STATEMENT – PROBLEM ANALYSIS:**

From 2005-2007, 3 captures of bighorn occurred in the Virgin River Gorge area of 13BN. The bighorn that were captured were used to supplement the populations in Kanab Creek in Unit 13A and Hells Half Acre in Unit 18B. In 2008, capture operations were suspended based on survey data, and a capture has not occurred since. No bighorn sheep have been transplanted into Kanab Creek since 2005.

Beginning in 2011, the bighorn sheep population in Unit 15D has been observing record numbers during surveys in October. Every year approximately 40 sheep have been removed from Unit 15D, and observations continue to increase. It is suspected that the trend will plateau or continue to increase as long as the population can be maintained at a healthy level. Future removal of bighorn sheep are planned for this unit.

A survey is scheduled in October 2014 (dates TBD) in Unit 15D and an HPC proposal has been submitted to survey again in October 2015. Following the 2015 survey and if population characteristics allow, a capture is again proposed to assist in meeting Statewide and regional objectives in bighorn sheep management. The captured bighorn will be used to supplement the bighorn populations around the State; Kanab Creek is expected to be the priority. Release sites will be determined following consultation with game branch personnel and regional staff.

#### **PROJECT OBJECTIVES:**

1. Following aerial surveys, and if population characteristics allow, capture 30-40 desert bighorn sheep from Unit 15D.
2. Captured bighorn sheep will be utilized to meet bighorn sheep management objectives in other parts of the state. Kanab Creek in Unit 12A/B/13A is expected to be the priority statewide, but other release areas may be utilized.
3. Continue to make progress towards meeting management objectives outlined in the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Management Plan as amended May 2006. This includes the following objective related to captures and transplants:  
“Capture and transplant bighorn sheep to improve their distribution throughout suitable habitat. Conduct transplants at new or existing water sources to encourage site fidelity, rather than at dry sites in an attempt to draw bighorn into unoccupied habitat. The Core Team should prioritize proposed captures and transplants based upon the immediacy of need and habitat areas with higher percentages of unoccupied habitat. Transplants to support existing populations should be given higher priority than those which fill gaps in distribution or extend their range.”

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGIES:**

1. Following a helicopter double-count survey in October of 2015, a determination will be made based on population characteristics whether a capture is warranted in Unit 15D.
2. As appropriate based on this determination, a helicopter capture will occur in early November 2015. Capture operations will follow established Department protocols. Trained personnel will be on scene to address animal health. This may be a Department contracted veterinarian or Department personnel.
3. 30-40 desert bighorn sheep will be captured in a ratio of approximately 1 ram:4 ewes. Young rams will be targeted and attempts will be made to capture adult ewes with lambs.
4. The captured animals will be translocated to other parts of Arizona to assist in meeting statewide and regional bighorn sheep management objectives.
5. VHF and/or GPS tracking collars may be placed on up to 10 of the bighorn to assist in post-release monitoring.

## **PROJECT LOCATION:**

Capture Area: Black Mountains – Unit 15D

Release Area (determined based on statewide management objectives): Kanab Creek – Unit 12A/B/13A; sites approved in the Region III & IV Mohave & La Paz County EA document.

## **LAND OWNERSHIP AT THE PROJECT SITE(S):**

(if the project area is private property, please state specifically and provide the landowner's name)

Capture Location: Designated Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands managed by the Kingman Field Office; area includes with some wilderness, which is also managed by BLM, Arizona State Lands and private lands surrounding the capture staging location. Small pockets of Arizona State Lands and private lands surround the capture location staging area and no activity will occur on these lands.

Release Location: Designated BLM lands managed by the Arizona Strip Field Office and areas managed by the North Kaibab Ranger District of the USFS.

## **HABITAT DESCRIPTION:**

Capture Location: Plant communities representative of the eastern edge of the Mohave desert; however, elements from the adjacent Sonoran and Great Basin deserts also occur and influence overall vegetative composition. Small patches of Great Basin conifer habitat occur at higher and wetter elevations.

Release Location: Plant communities representative of Mojave Desert Scrub and higher elevation pinyon-juniper woodlands. Vegetative species include black brush, mortonia, cliffrose, creosote bush, bursage, and Utah Juniper in the higher elevations.

## **ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:**

### Special Big Game License Tag Funds

- Lotek GPS Collars - 10 collars, new or refurbished, @ \$3,500 or less per collar = \$35,000.00

### Matching PR Funds

- Helicopter Capture - 2 Aerostar helicopters for 3 days each @ \$1,500 per hour for 6 hours per day = \$54,000.00

### Total Funds

- \$89,000.00

## **LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:**

Arizona Strip BLM, Kingman BLM, USFS North Kaibab Ranger District, ADBSS, Regions II & III, Game Program

## **WOULD IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROJECT ASSIST IN PROVIDING, MAINTAINING, OR FACILITATING RECREATIONAL ACCESS?**

YES[X] NO[] N/A[]

Augmenting existing bighorn sheep populations across the State provides extensive recreation opportunity including hunting and wildlife viewing.

## **PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:**

This project will be monitored by AGFD personnel, including individuals from Game Branch, regional staff, and the wildlife manager of 12A/B.

Data obtained from this project will be utilized to determine future management objectives for the bighorn population in Kanab Creek 12A/B, and will also be used as part of the annual hunt recommendation process to aid in determination of permit levels in the units.

## **PROJECT MAINTENANCE:**

Long-term maintenance of this project will be near zero. It is not anticipated that future maintenance of the individual animals captured and released will be needed; however monitoring will occur on the released animals as described above.

## **PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:**

Todd Buck – Wildlife Manager

**WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS** (*please use the worksheet below*): N/A

**TREE CLEARING/REMOVAL PROJECTS** (*please use the worksheet below*): N/A

